**Community Board 17**

**Sanitation Committee Meeting**

**Monday, September 19, 2022**

**Present: Excused:**

Joseph Cobourne **(BM)** Jorge Tait **(BM)**

Berlotte Antoine **(BM)**

Vanessa Quashie

Yolanda Alleyne

Frederick Watson

Lilieth Robinson

Alexandra Schmidbauer

T.S. Candii

Jeanick Williams

Hazel Martinez

Monica McKain-Brown

Jadeeva Smith

George Gayle

Theo Maughan

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The **Sanitation Committee Virtual** meeting was held on **Monday, September 19, 2022 at 7:30pm.**

**Mr. Joseph Cobourne** called the meeting to order 7:38pm.

He thanked everyone that worked with him in the previous fiscal year on the Sanitation Committee and he is actually looking forward to working with them and putting some plans in place.

This year, they will be working closely with the Parks & Beautification Committee and they can expect some collaboration meetings in the following months to come to keep the groups informed

**Roll Call**-Joseph Cobourne, Yolanda Alleyne, Alexandra Schmidbauer, Berlotte Antoine, Frederick Watson, Hazel Martinez, Jeanick Williams, Monica McKain-Brown, T.S. Candii, Vanessa Quashie, Jadeeva Smith, George Gayle, Theo Maughan, Lilieth Heron Robinson

**Mr. Cobourne** said they do not have a quorum and will table the minutes from the June 20, 2022 meeting.

For those that worked with him in the previous fiscal year, they had a conversation about having a beautification initiative for East Flatbush. The way it was envisioned was so massive and after speaking to the Chair and other senior members, they thought of some ways to try and condense it, with the resources they have right now.

At the retreat, they came up with the idea of creating a large database for informing and making reports on large dumping and blockage of catch basins. Something that is virtually able for community residents to sign into the link and update the information on locations where all the cars are piling up and locations of catch basins that are filled, where trees are too large and need to be trimmed. Whoever the Chair is, they will be able to log in and see the constant reports that are filed with 3-1-1 and directly send them to the liaison for CB 17, Ms. Cunningham and Mr. Cyrus. If they have any questions or ideas, please expand on them. He would like to select a subcommittee to put those ideas together. Last year, he tried to do everything himself, but this year, he wants to implement delegating and leaning on them to see if that would make their agenda move much faster and attack thing much more efficiently.

**Ms. Vanessa Quashie** said she loves the idea and it is the right direction they are going into. She asked do they have buy-in from Ms. Cunningham and Mr. Cyrus?

**Mr. Cobourne** said the idea was brought up and they definitely liked the idea, but they have not discussed the full details of it yet. This was done internally with Ms. Fraser and Mr. Daley to see what their vision could be and the first course of action for the committee is to track all the hot zones through the 3-1-1 database to see where these urgent complaints are coming from, where are the common trends so they will know where to target their promotion locations.

**Ms. Quashie** said that can be very slippery to put a database together and they don’t have a buy-in as to what they are going to do and how would that database get the proper attention from their divisions.

**Mr. Cobourne** said in terms of the database, it would not be something so complicated and would have to be on a special domain. The idea is to create a Google forum with all of their targeted information and the Chairperson and the Community Board will monitor and have access to that email and will be able to transfer the information to the proper personnel. He would get a response and send it to that person at his convenience. This would make the system more efficient if it is running through CB 17 and this would be done weekly. He would check the database and categorize the information, because it is already set up in the program and send it to Ms. Cunningham, the liaison for any of those issues, or if need be, contact the NYPD and send them all the data of the cars that are on Avenue D and Utica Avenue for 3 months that people are reporting, or if there is a tree that needs trimming, they would be able to reach out to the Sanitation Dept. and they would have a compiled list of issues for the month.

**Ms. Quashie** said they need to have someone who is more senior than Ms. Cunningham on the email, because she is too low on the totem pole to get something done. Once they have the database, and they need action, they don’t need weeks and weeks of someone trying to look at an email of 3-1-1 tickets or the Google database they have and the people on the block will continuously have these problems. Once they do the database of the hot zones, they will stay persistent and they just have to keep sending it out.

**Mr. Cobourne** said he sees her point and he would definitely have to think outside of the box. Mr. Cyprus is one level above her and is one of the enforcers for this district. He will think of who they can incorporate to keep some form of accountability on the Dept. of Sanitation.

**Ms. Hazel Martinez** said looking back on her own complaints for the last 20 years, she is still complaining about the same issues. There is no accountability and the agencies are not responsive and part of the sanitation problems are from the residents that live in this community. They came and swept the street and the next day, it was the same thing. Unless Sanitation wants to do more than clean up, like doing surveillance or involve this community in the camera program like in other communities. The Mayor used to be the Borough President and he does not know this community even exist. None of these agencies does anything at all. When talking about parks, they are not that responsive when it comes to tree care and forestry and the tree roots are sticking up on the sidewalks in the neighborhoods and they are hazardous to the resident’s wellbeing. There are branches that are too low, and she has requested tree pruning and that has not happened since last year. Them having this online stuff, a lot of people in this community don’t use that, so they will not be sending them anything.

**Mr. Cobourne** said he hears her and thanked her for raising that concern, but as one of the senior members, he feels they cannot be too pessimistic with division because at the end of the day, it is still their community and they have to do what they must. The ticket initiative won’t be perfect, but at the same time if there is something in place that is much more substantial, they might be able to see the smallest of change. As in their community, they need to give themselves the time to adapt with technology, because whether they like it or not, this is the future and if they can’t make it work for them, they will definitely get left behind and the issue is just going to become much more abysmal and be to chaotic to control.

**Ms. Martinez** said he is a young person and is not cognizant to the fact that there are a lot of seniors in this community that don’t have computers or not using them and those residents also need to have their issues to be addressed. They need to find other means besides just trying to shove this whole internet down ………….. and it is not going to solve anything. She has not seen any changes and she has been in the Council office and they have a big database of all these complaints, and she has not seen any changes either and they are the same complaints the Board has.

**Mr. Cobourne** said those are definitely valid concerns and he cannot overlook, and that is the purpose of the committee to see whether or not if this is something they can make tangible and there is definitely going to be issues. He wants to hear everyone’s input.

**Ms. Yolanda Alleyne** said once the information is placed in the database, what is the timeframe between putting it in the database and accomplishing the goal and is there going to be a time limit?

**Mr. Cobourne** said this is a concern and this is a system they would set into place to keep the committee members also accountable. They create the database and they agree amongst the subcommittee that every Tuesday and Thursday, somebody will have to check it and they would also have to work with DSNY, NYPD and their systems in place. Sometimes, they are slow and sometimes, they are fast with responses, but on their end as they create this, they will try to find someone that would help them to keep the other organizations accountable. This really comes down to the plan they put into place. As the Sanitation Committee of CB 17, with those here trying to take initiative, identify the problem and try to make a change.

**Ms. Alleyne** said in essence, there will be a timeframe between the committee sending it to DSNY and the Police Dept. to accomplish the goals and if they have to wait weeks, there is no accountability.

**Mr. Cobourne** said they would have to use the resources at their disposal. They are a small committee, but a large Community Board that represents a large body of people in the borough of Brooklyn, however, there is only so much they can do as the organization they are and their size, plus with their finances and resources and this is where practical comes into sense. They can expect much from the members, but they cannot expect them to commit to the level that would be the best and most efficient way for the Community Board.

**Ms. Alexandra Schmidbauer** said to give them a different angle on this, her group is a volunteer group of neighbors around Snyder and Rogers Avenues to Tilden Avenue and Beverly Road. In late 2020, they started a Google docs spreadsheet of all the issues that weren’t getting addressed and keep track of how many 3-1-1 calls were put in on each one. It is a good idea and hard to keep up on and they have to get people to bring it up at every meeting possible. She had a meeting with Theresa Cunningham from DSNY and also the Community Affairs Officer from the 67th Pct. and they walked around Rogers, Nostrand and Snyder Avenues and they looked all of the smashed up cars, the cars that have been sitting on the west side of Rogers Avenue between Erasmus Street and Snyder Avenue and some have been there for an entire year and there is a thick layer of muck underneath them and collected litter. They have already taken it to that level and going in, they would have to have another plan of action. The NYPD is not doing anything and they have made promises to them and have not kept them, but maybe towed some cars here and there and replace them right back with smashed up ones. There has got to be someone above them to hold them accountable. She does not want their work to be for nothing and she thinks they can do all that work and have a really good system. They would have to identify the next level of accountability they would go to if they are not getting any responses from the Precinct.

**Mr. Cobourne** thanked Ms. Schmidbauer for that input, and her experience would save them a lot of time and effort. That is what the purpose of the subcommittee would be, to discuss and iron out those details.

**Ms. Quashie** said this goes back to them needing a higher level of accountability and an agreement of who they are going to partner with in these organizations. Another thing they need is a listing for the sweepers that don’t sweep the streets. They went back to 2 days a week as of July 6, 2022 and they are flying through the community and not picking up the trash and the streets are still dirty after they leave. Sometimes, there is no water in the trucks, and they are pushing the dirt back on the sidewalks. They need to make sure that Sanitation is accountable on all factors and if they are going to do this database, they need to get someone to look at East Flatbush and ask why is it filthy? If someone went behind them after the sweepers leave and the trash is still there, the sweeper did not do their job effectively. There is a lot of foot traffic on Farragut Road and people drop trash on the street and it blows down Farragut Road from Utica Avenue all the way down to Albany Avenue.

**Mr. Cobourne** said he hopes they can get a lot of members on the subcommittee so they can see the vision through.

**Ms. TS Candii** said as a driver, there are no parking lots that residents can park their cars in that have broken down. They are in a marginalized community and the residents don’t have the funds to get their cars up and running and Sanitation blowing debris under the cars. They should be mindful that they are towing their community resident’s cars, and this is putting them in a more in financial bind because they would have to pay the tow fees. Some of the cars do not have registrations because people cannot afford them and she does not want to take from a community that has worked hard to get their vehicles.

**Mr. Cobourne** said he does agree that they are a marginalized community and it would be insensitive of them to overlook all of those factors and he will make sure the subcommittee takes that into consideration, but on the other end of that, they have to be mindful of the larger issue with Sanitation in their community. They don’t want to attack people and give them an unrealistic time for them to find a place for their car, but at the same time and if they truly want to see an effective **(INAUDIBLE)** they are definitely going to have to apply pressure in an unbiased manner and take into consideration for those that need some form of equity assistance consideration in this situation.

**Ms. Martinez** said their streets are filled with vehicles for sale, unregistered, not following any of the rules of the road and she does not have any sympathy for those individuals and they need to follow, just like everybody else and they are taking up a lot of parking spaces and some don’t move their car for a year. Sanitation needs to have enforcement with the businesses that do not clean in front of their properties and it blows over to the resident’s home and they are getting summonses and being fined and there is no enforcement for the businesses.

**Mr. Frederick Watson** said on Utica Avenue between Foster Avenue and Avenue D, there is a car wash and body shop that cause congestion and they park on the sidewalk causing people to walk in the street and that did not happen many years ago. On the corner of Utica Avenue and Avenue D, in front of the Church, they put all their garbage there and sometimes, they cannot even walk around it and something needs to be done about that.

**Mr. Cobourne** said he has already spoken with the Chair because this was a concern raised before, and it has been an ongoing issue for the neighbors on the block and in the community for the past how many years. He is going to approach Sanitation and the NYPD to see if they can get some active movement on that specific location moving forward.

**Ms. Monica McKain-Brown** said the point brought up by Mr. Watson, she thinks it is really ridiculous and she is glad they are looking into it because they seem to have no respect for those walking on the sidewalk and they are washing cars. In regards to what Ms. Martinez said, and she does agree with her and does not think they are that marginalized in this community and many of them have 3 or 4 cars and they do not move the cars for whatever reason they put their hoods up knowing that Sanitation is not going to bother them and the street in front of them are very dirty. She thinks they need to have respect for themselves and the politicians and those responsible for assisting them should also have some respect for them also, but they are responsible to a large **(INAUDIBLE)** On her block, the people do not move their cars and it is not because they are marginalized because they are either selling a vehicle or for whatever reason. They come from all over where they come from and this is the USA and they need some respect and to respect each other and respect the fact that they live in community, and should keep it as clean as they can. With their help and those that are responsible for helping them do so. They vote them in all the time, and they get no respect.

**Mr. Cobourne** said he agrees with her and this is a multifaceted situation and they have to take their time in considering. The goal of this meeting is to put together a subcommittee, so they can always have a team who are having these conversations actively throughout the year and compiling that agenda.

**Ms. Candii** said have an unregistered vehicle on the street is not illegal and is not a federal crime **(INAUDIBLE)**

**Mr. Cobourne** said he hears the concerns of everyone, and they are going to take their time and make sure they create something that addresses these issues. They compile these databases and there is no action following through. This is their number one objective with the subcommittee, to make sure they think of systems in place to keep both groups accountable while taking into consideration foot traffic, residents who have a certain lack of ethics, which is prolonging the issue in the committee. He asked who would like to be a part of the subcommittee? He will be working to send out follow up emails and they can have a separate meeting to talk and those not on the committee, they will keep them up to date on the meetings monthly and if things are not progressing as they would like them to, then perhaps bi-monthly.

**Mr. George Gayle** said he heard them talking about the cars, and he thinks his block is the dirtiest. There are vehicles that have been parked on the block for years and they stick the hoods up when Sanitation comes around and when Sanitation leaves, they put it down. He would like to be a part of the subcommittee and attend more meetings.

**Mr. Cobourne** said on the other end of their initiative of addressing the conditions of their community, he thinks they can take another action that is not too unrealistic. He was told by Ms. Fraser that a couple of years back, the Chair of the Sanitation Committee and CB 17 had worked together to reach out to the Brooklyn Borough President to get some type of grant or funding for tree guards and additional trees in the community. He was thinking that not only reach out to the Brooklyn Borough President as well as the Mayor. Based on the current prices of tree guards and getting trees installed, it is a pump sum of money. What the subcommittee would be responsible for is basically getting the statistics of the goal. With the 3-1-1 data requests, they are going to be pulling in for the committee, they would know which trees, which residential blocks would like trees added to their block and they will use that as an estimate of how many trees they would need as well as how many tree guards to curb the litter that flats around and get in the tree pits, as well as people not cleaning up the droppings of their pets.

**Ms. Quashie** said she loves the idea of putting trees where there are none, but be selective with the type of trees that the City provides because they will produce more garbage because the trees will drop a lot of leaves and foliage, and no one cleans them up and that also goes into the catch basins. The tree in front of her house drops leaves all year round.

**Mr. Cobourne** said that is something he has thought about, but he envisioned that they would be selecting the trees and the contractor would be providing and making the tree guards. Based on their resources from the last committee meeting, they know there are some local businesses in the community that make tree guards that they can get at a reasonable discount. If they are able to provide and allocate the funds from the Brooklyn Borough President and the Mayor, then the focus of the subcommittee would be to do all of that and figure out the facts and what trees would be best as to not create a mess in the community.

**Ms. McKain-Brown** asked who is responsible for maintaining the trees after they have been planted because she does not see a lot of them being maintained?

**Mr. Cobourne** said in terms of the upkeep, if there is an area that needs to be cleaned, based on his conversations with Sanitation, if they have an issue with the tree that has litter or leaves, they would be responsible for informing their liaison and the enforcer for their district and they would reach out to the proper channels to assemble a team to clean it up. They have had similar issues, but that is the system in place. The goal is which he is hearing, based on a previous conversation is they need to actively consider is who they want from these organizations to be the **(INAUDIBLE)** for them to make sure everyone is being held accountable, so that all the **(INAUDIBLE)** components that they would need to make this initiative effective.

**Ms. Martinez** said she is unsure of that because the residents are responsible for the sidewalk and 18’’ into the street, which she assumes that would include the tree beds. The tree beds in this community is a place where they urinate and throw cups and bottles and if they put a tree guard, it something to contain that and makes it difficult to get it out of there.

**Mr. Cobourne** said he will double down and check his resources and clarify that point for the next meeting of the subcommittee. In terms of the additional tree guards, that would be a decision left up to the subcommittee and anyone who wants to join. He asked if they want to vote and he will be listening and will participate as well because he does not want the sole decision to be left to him. As a committee, if they rule out the tree guards, they will scratch that whole idea and just focus on getting additional trees to beautify the community.

**Ms. Candii** said she loves trees, but some of the homeowners are having issues with raking leaves.

**Mr. Gayle** said regarding the tree guards, instead of having four corners, they can have three sides and they can be easily cleaned out and maintained because the opening would be facing the street.

**Ms. Jeanick Williams** said she wants more trees on her block and she has emails requesting trees to be planted on her block and they planted 2 trees and one was poisoned because the neighbor said it was making a lot of leaves and she received a fine of $1,500.00 and that sent a message to the other neighbors who were also trying to poison other trees. She thinks the tree guards are also important because it helps to keep the dogs from pooping around the trees and it is terrible that people don’t pick up after their dogs. When the garbage is being picked up and the bag breaks, the workers do not pick it up and they have brooms and shovels on the side of the trucks. More outreach needs to be done in the community.

**Mr. Cobourne** said no matter how bad the situations gets, he would rather do something effective to solve, because at the end of the day, this is one of the last standing black communities in Brooklyn besides East New York and Brownsville. If they are not actively putting up their defense, they will become swept up.

**Ms. Martinez** said residents should have the option and not be forced to have a tree in front of their homes if they don’t want one because they are the ones that have to pick up the leaves.

**Mr. Watson** said he has put signs on light poles telling people to clean up after their dogs or they will be fined. When the signs are removed, he replaces them with another one.

**Mr. Cobourne** said they would need the homeowner’s permission to put a tree in front of their homes that would be a burden to them.

**Ms. Martinez** said once these trees are put up, the Forestry Dept. does not maintain the them and the roots have pushed the sidewalks up to a dangerous level and they would be adding more to this problem because no one is fixing them and homeowners are afraid of being sued and they would have the expense of fixing something the City has caused.

**Mr. Cobourne** said these are all valid concerns. They always want to push for that level of accountability amongst each other, where they can be candied and hold each other accountable, while also taking into consideration the reality of their community because they are constantly being pushed in and there are residents who own property that are not about the community and don’t have an invested stake because they are not like the residents that have been here for 2 decades and watch this transformation. Someone like that is going to be more invested in keeping themselves accountable as well as their neighbors. This is going to be an uphill battle and they have to be willing to push for their goals.

For the trees and tree guard subcommittee, he has Ms. Schmidbauer, Ms. Robinson, Jeanick Williams, TS Candii, Jadeeva Smith.

For the database initiative subcommittee, he has George Gayle, Alexandra Schmidbauer, Jeanick Williams, Yolanda Alleyne, TS Candii, Vanessa Quashie, Jadeeva Smith.

They have their goals and agenda, and the subcommittees will have a lot of work to work on.

As an overall detailed account of what their vision would be for each committee. He will send follow-up emails. For the subcommittees agenda, thinking of all the proper channels that they would need to address each categorized issues that they want in this database, that people can automatically click on, and thinking of who would be the best person to target on the ladder, who would be most effective at implementing whatever system they find that can create to hold these organizations accountable, and figuring out what their follow through goal is. Organizations have done this before and they just want to make sure it doesn’t stop at collecting the information, what is their next step of action and how could the next person to follow as Chair in the future, be able to pick up automatically where they left off and continue the missions.

As a committee, they would categorize all the issues so it would be easy for the community residents to categorize them and also being mindful socioeconomics issues of the committee. They do not want to antagonize people, but they also want to apply pressure to make people know in the community, that they are keeping them accountable. This is what they will be focusing on in the committee.

For the database initiative, he will send an email to the entire committee as well as the subcommittees. He will select a follow-up date to start ironing out some details.

For the trees and tree guard subcommittee, they got a little push back after hearing the input from some property owners, the community residents that would like the beautification initiative, and they will do a lot more voting on this committee. The first agenda would be focusing and doing studies on what trees would beautify the community, but are low maintenance, so homeowners would feel like they are picking up an extra burden and also seeking resident’s approval for the tree in front of their properties. The committee will be focusing on if they want the additional tree guards by just adding the tree guards on 3 sides, leaving the street side open, making it easier for the homeowners to clean out.

Also, focusing on areas and locations that are less commercial, and trying to incorporate a contracting service to collect the leaves for the seniors in the Fall. He does not know the urgency of the grant and also drafting a letter for the Brooklyn Borough President and the Mayor and see what they can pull from them and the discretionary funding.

Should they have a category in the database for homeowners to complain about the leaves blowing from the park onto private properties, rather than attacking it as an individual issue? What are their thoughts on that?

**Ms. Martinez** said this is an issue that has to be managed by the Parks Committee. The Parks staff need to be more cognizant and aware of what they are doing and they need to have a better process. The Parks Dept. has a machine that vacuums the leaves, it is just not used here in this district.

**Mr. Cobourne** said this year, they are looking to collaborate more with the Parks & Beautification Committee, so when they reach out to the Parks Dept., they can have a more united front to keep an eye on the organization to make sure they are following through with their goal.

**Ms. Candii** asked if more trash cans could be added to the area and make sure that Sanitation will empty them. The trash cans are in the commercial areas.

**Mr. Cobourne** said that has been on the list since last year. The major concern about adding additional trash cans was which ones would they like to see. He was speaking to Mr. Ross about solar powered trash compactors at major intersections like Rogers and Church Avenues, Utica and Church Avenues, where high traffic often leaves trash cans overflowing and with the trash compactor, it could fit up to 6 times as much trash as the regular trash bin could hold. The other end to that is financially, and where would they get the funding. They would have to incorporate the elected officials, the Brooklyn Borough President and the Mayor to really try to get the funds for primary targeted locations. This is on the agenda already.

He thanked the members for their feedback and attending the meeting.

He asked if there were any other issues to discuss? Having heard none, he asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting?

**Ms. Quashie** made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Ms. Alleyne** seconded the motion.